

**For Immediate Release: March 16, 2010**

**Contact: Paul Mounds 860-278-8888**

**Larson: We Are Closer to Reforming our Nation's Health Insurance System**

**Washington, DC** – Today, U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) announced that House Democrats are closer than ever to reforming our nation's broken health insurance system with a plan that puts Americans back in control of their health care choices, holds insurance companies accountable, and makes coverage more affordable.

Connecticut will see immediate benefits as soon as the legislation goes into effect. Individuals who are uninsured because of a pre-existing condition will be able to buy affordable coverage through a temporary high-risk pool while banning insurers from denying coverage to children with pre-existing conditions. In addition, insurance companies will be prohibited from dropping people when they get sick and seniors' costs for prescription drugs will go down.

**"This bill gives Connecticut residents more choices and brings down their health care costs," said Rep. Larson. "As soon as it's enacted, small businesses, seniors, young people, and those who have been discriminated against by insurance companies will see immediate relief."**

**Once the bill is enacted it will:**

- Prohibit insurance companies from dropping your coverage when you get sick.
- Ban insurance companies from denying coverage to children with pre-existing conditions.
- Require new private plans to cover preventative services and immunizations with no co-payments.
- Provide a tax credit of up to 35% of premiums to small businesses that provide health coverage to their employees.
- Extend coverage to young people, allowing them to remain on their parents' insurance policy until their 26th birthday.
- Create a temporary high-risk pool to insure those who are currently uninsured because of a cancer, diabetes or any other pre-existing condition.
- Protect consumers by ensuring they have access to an effective internal and external appeals process to appeal insurance plan decisions.
- Eliminate lifetime limits and restrictive annual limits on benefits in all plans.

-Increase funding for new training programs to train more primary care doctors, nurses, and public health professionals and for community health centers – allowing them to almost double the amount of patients they treat over the next five years.

**For seniors in Connecticut, the legislation will provide immediate relief by:**

-Providing a \$250 rebate for Medicare beneficiaries who hit the “donut hole.”

-Making preventative services and immunizations free under Medicare right away – eliminating co-payments for preventative services and exempting preventative services from deductibles.

-Expanding home and community care so seniors can live longer in their homes not at a nursing home.

**“I’ve traveled around this district and spoken to residents that know firsthand how important reforming the health insurance system is to this nation. I think about Kristen Martinez from Colebrook, who at the age of 31 was diagnosed with stage 4 Metastatic Breast Cancer and fears she will be dropped by her insurance company. And the seniors I met at the Windsor Senior Center, who talked about the rising costs of prescription drugs and the need to close the Medicare Part D “donut hole”. They cannot wait any longer for action and I stand with them,” said Rep. Larson. “By enacting health care reform right away, we will be able to lower costs for everyone, providing the seniors like the ones I met in Windsor, and citizens like Kristen, more control and security when it comes to their health care.”**

**###**